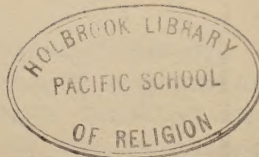


To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which
here in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church;
to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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Making Rural Community Surveys

By Dan R. Davis*

Change has taken place in rural Texas and change will continue to affect population migration, farming methods, number of farms, standard of living, rural communities, and churches.

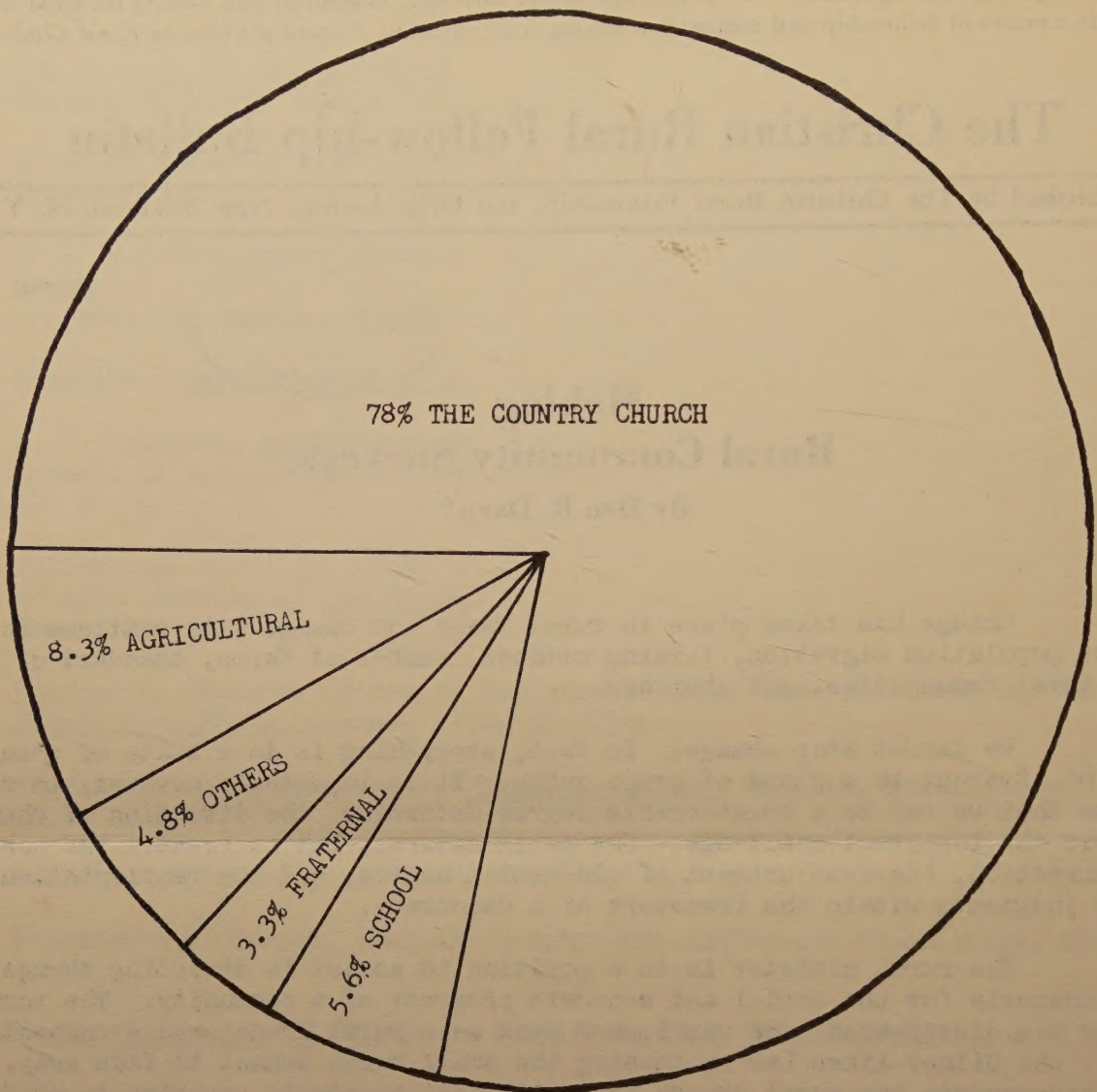
We cannot stop change. In fact, everything is in a state of change from Mt. Everest to a glass of grape juice. It is important, however, to recognize that we can to a considerable degree determine the direction of change. This is the important challenge. Change is natural, but it creates the need for direction, the readjustment of old mental habits, and the reorientation of value judgments within the framework of a democracy.

The rural minister is in a position to assist in directing change into channels for the social and economic progress of a community. The rural doctor has disappeared. He was looked upon as a rural leader and a counselor. Today, the Gilmer-Aiken Law is causing the small rural school to fade away. As a consequence the rural church is in its most strategic position to render rural leadership and service in modern history. The monkey is on your back; the challenge and the added responsibility are yours -- like it or not. The key problem for the rural church is the leadership problem. Don't fail when the time is ripe.

We may illustrate the strategic position of the church by citing a recent study made by the Agricultural Experiment Station in North Carolina. Since that state is also undergoing some rural changes similar to those in Texas this study is of value.

We may conclude from this study that the quality of rural society may be said to depend largely on the nature of the leadership of the rural church. Certainly, rural leaders who want to see the people adopt new and improved methods of farming and homemaking should cooperate closely with the

* Mr. Davis is Associate Professor of Rural Sociology at Texas Arts and Mechanical College, College Station, Texas. We are indebted to him for sharing this useful discussion on rural church surveys with us.



"The country church in North Carolina holds the No. 1 position of rural influence. Rural people continue to give to the rural church the largest part of the time they allot to organizations. Organizations other than the churches reach only a comparatively small number of people." *

rural church. Certainly, the rural minister is in a strategic position to shape the direction of community change for social and economic progress. For instance, he may feel that it is desirable for rural people to affiliate with organizations outside of the church -- to cooperate with the county agricultural agent, home demonstration agent, soil conservation service, and county health unit -- since that which strengthens the community will also strengthen the church.

* Research and Farming, Vol. VIII, No. 2, North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station.

Furthermore, the rural minister is in a position to advocate community surveys to determine the needs of the community. Knowledge of community resources and liabilities is important to shaping a community's destiny.

Most surveys that have been undertaken by the church have been restricted to church preference surveys. The rural church can no longer afford to restrict itself or to struggle by itself. When this happens, both church and community life suffer since the church and the community are vital to each other.

Avoid stereotyped questions in a community survey. Stimulate committee discussions in order to develop a questionnaire appropriate to your particular community. When the people themselves begin thinking and discussing as a group, a more appropriate and distinctive survey can be planned. In this way also community leaders gain experience in acting as a group. I will cite references for assistance in the mechanical construction of questionnaires. However, these references will be of value only when supplemented by local group discussions.

It is important to make surveys that are useful and simple and to present the findings in a manner that they may be easily understood by all. The following questions may suggest the need for surveys in your community:

1. To what extent do the farm people of a community cooperate with the county agent, home demonstration agent, vocational agriculture teacher, PMA, and the soil conservation service for strengthening the agricultural resources of the community?
2. To what extent have the people of the community recognized the value of a program for marketing their agricultural products?
3. Has the community taken inventory and mobilized its potential youth leadership for the development of the community and church?
4. What is the educational level of the adult population and is the adult educational need sufficient for the church or school to provide library facilities?
5. What diseases have been most common to the people of the community for the past three years and to what extent have the people used the facilities of a county health unit, if available?
6. What kind of community recreational program would the people be most likely to support?
7. What are the opinions and attitudes of the people toward local government? Would they support a local institute for studying "The Democratic Responsibilities of Citizens to Local, State, and Federal Governments"?

The above questions are typical of the many questions that may be used to stimulate interest in making community surveys. But do not begin and end with the making of surveys. Collecting information is not enough. Whole-some group action must follow. People in a democratic community can be depended upon to act as a group when a sufficient number have been provided with an adequate understanding of the facts. Fact finding and planning, when applied to the development of a community, are nothing but common sense. It is

by this method that the people of a community may, to a considerable extent, determine the destiny of a community while directing change into constructive channels. But, there must be no lack of vision of what the community might be -- "where there is no vision, the people perish." The rural church is in the most strategic position to provide this needed vision.

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The following references, when supplemented by local group discussions, are especially helpful in devising survey questionnaires appropriate to your community.

1. An Experiment in Informal Community Organization. Progress Report 1323, Texas Agricultural Station, College Station, Texas. 3 pp. Free. This report indicates the importance of a survey to shaping the destiny of a small Texas community.
2. So You Want to Make a Community Study? The Hogg Foundation, Austin, Texas. 14 pp. Free.
3. Manual for the Home Town Self-Survey. Southern Regional Council, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia. 82 pp. 35¢. This is an excellent reference.
4. Rural Communities: What Do They Need Most? Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 14 pp.
5. Making Community Surveys. Pamphlet No. 73, Extension Service, University Farm, St. Paul, Minnesota.
6. Local Action for Community Development. Pennsylvania State Chamber of Commerce, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. 48 pp. Free.
7. Your Community: Its Provisions for Health, Education, Safety, and Welfare. Russell Sage Foundation, 505 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 261 pp. This is one of the most useful references available.
8. A Community Mobilizes Its Youth. Pamphlet No. 120, New Dominion Series. University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. 10 pp. 10¢.
9. A Community Organization Program for Small Communities, by Dan R. Davis. Bulletin No. 110, The Christian Rural Fellowship, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N.Y. 5¢.

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